

CONDUCT OF THE PARTISAN WAR IN THE  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOUTH

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

by

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## ABSTRACT

CONDUCT OF THE PARTISAN WAR IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOUTH,  
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The partisan war in the Revolutionary War South demonstrated the vital linkage between the civil and military authorities. In the policies created to persuade the people of the righteousness of the American cause and neutralize opposition, the civil leadership of South Carolina inadvertently set the conditions for a violent civil war. The experiences derived from a century's worth of almost constant conflict, both internal and external, determined the nature of the ensuing civil war. Upon the occupation by the British in 1780, the calm that settled over the Southern colonies was brief, as British military leaders addressed the political problem in such a way as to lead to renewed revolt and an effective partisan campaign. The civil war became intertwined with the overall campaigns of the American and British forces, with the nature of the leaders having equal effect on the concurrent civil war.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. SETTLEMENT AND EARLY CONFLICT.....	12
3. NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE MILITIA.....	29
4. CIVIL WAR IN THE BACKCOUNTRY.....	40
5. LEADERS AND ORGANIZATION .....	48
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	74
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	82
CARL CERTIFICATION FORM.....	83

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution is enshrined in the American national conscious as a glorious endeavor in which a group of courageous, honorable, and just heroes triumphed over the cowardly, cruel, and dictatorial blackguards. The common conception seems to be all members of the American society were treated to the civil liberties the Continental Army fought for, and the British were without exception a terrible occupation force. To look at the Revolution in such stark terms fails to do justice to either side, as war is subject to all of mankind's capacity for the heroic as well as weakness. Within the struggle for redress, then independence from Great Britain, it was also a civil war fought over differing visions of how the American colonies should be governed. In the Southern department, the strategic problem of combating insurgent forces was complicated by a vicious civil war disrupting stabilization.

The Revolutionary War's Southern campaign is an object lesson in the failure of the civil and military leaders to take into account the political and military history of an area and its people. The unintended consequences of their decisions and policy caused a bloody conflict, which effectively destroyed any chances of the victors and vanquished being able to rebuild a common society.

The myriad of twentieth century revolutionary movements demanded the same level of sensitivity to the underlying societal dynamics. The Cold War led to many of the conflicts being framed as a military struggle between the forces of democracy and communism, ignoring the deeper issues of the conflicts. The political and social ills have been overlooked in pursuit of the ideological goal. The tendency remains to view the

warring factions much as the British did their unruly colonies -- as less developed and civilized. In doing so, leaders of both the civic and military aid often overlook the cultural and historical biases of countries and further inflame the population. Those in leadership positions must be aware of the linkages between the military and civic actions and the ramifications of a mistake in either realm.

Further, animosities fostered by the conduct of the war as well as traditional rivalries must be considered in the making and execution of policy. The observations in the Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* point out: "These conditions may have originated years ago and in many cases have been permitted to develop freely without any attempt to apply corrective measures . . . being basically a political adjustment, the military measures applied must be of secondary importance and applied only to such extent as to permit the continuation of peaceful corrective measures."<sup>1</sup>

The impact of the application of military force must also be carefully considered. For example, the introduction of American combat troops into Vietnam provided an opportunity for the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam to color themselves as nationalists vice communists. The actions at Lexington and Concord, followed by Bunker Hill, certainly changed the perception of the patriot<sup>2</sup> cause from a disagreement over government to open revolt. The British plan for trained and armed loyalists to take over the fight in the South resembles the French *jaunissement* and American Vietnamization programs nearly two centuries later. While the premise was sound, the plans failed due to inadequately addressing military and political problems and ignoring the root causes of the upheaval.



As the United States enters an era being proclaimed as the Pax Americana,<sup>3</sup> the interaction of civil and military authorities in formulating and executing campaign plans is critical. The need to understand and address the grievances of all parties, while considering the second and third order effects of actions, becomes increasingly important as the advances in communications allow the world to both watch and judge performance instantaneously. As the United States seeks to enable establishment of democracies in nations with long histories of internal conflict, the lessons of America's own revolutionary past are of use.

The reaction of the British to vocal and increasingly well-organized protest led them down the roads to Lexington and Concord in April of 1775, finally unleashing the furies that had sprung from the Stamp Act and the Intolerable Acts. The early colonial unrest set the stage for much of the events that subsequently occurred, especially in the Southern colonies. Loyalties defined friend or foe, with the enemy next door or down the road. The patriot and his loyalist neighbor struggled with the problem of controlling of the "enemy" and convincing him to convert to the "right" school of thought. Throughout the colonies, both patriots and loyalists sought to browbeat and coerce their adversaries into submission. In New England, the Middle Atlantic, and the South, the methods different groups used to control their perceived enemies differed widely. Of the colonies, the backcountry of the Carolinas witnessed some of the worst internal strife both prior to and during the war.

Contemporaries in the American Revolution repeatedly refer to the ravages inflicted upon each other by the various military and partisan groups in the backcountry. General Nathanael Greene, upon his assignment to command the army of the Southern

Department described the condition to Alexander Hamilton, “The division among the people is much greater than I imagined. . . . [They] persecute each other, with little less than savage fury. There is nothing but murders and devastation in every quarter.”<sup>4</sup>

Partisan warfare played an important role in both the military and civil affairs of the American Revolution, as it served both the needs from the earliest days of unrest until well after the cessation of the conflict. The British and Americans both sought to use regular troops and militia for the traditional means of conducting a war, while depending on a combination of militia and partisans to exercise control over the population and countryside. The varying success of their strategies depended on the leadership’s comprehension of the nature of the civil war and his ability to coopt the partisan leaders into his vision of the campaign. The civil war aspects of the American Revolution are key to understanding the treatment of civilians and property throughout the war as reflections of the experiences derived from a century’s worth of almost constant conflict determined the nature of the ensuing war.

The struggle between patriots and loyalists for the support of the population in the Carolina backcountry was grounded in a fundamental lack of understanding of the settlement history of the region and the effect of sanctioning the use of military force to convince the population of the correctness of either the patriot or of the loyalist stance. In the critical early years of the Revolution, the actions of the civil authorities to relegate dissenters to second class citizens and the willingness to use military means to control questionable populations set the conditions for excessive use of violence in pursuit of what was considered right. The civilian leaders failed to understand the consequences of earlier upheavals over settlement, law and order, and the impact of the French and Indian

War and subsequent Cherokee War in determining how the diverse frontier population, still fearing Indian incursions, would react. In not understanding the link between their ingrained forms of warfare, both the civilian and military leaders inadvertently encouraged greater violence.

Legislation delegated the task of suppression of loyalists to local governments, leaving the individual Councils of Safety to determine the means.<sup>5</sup> In areas of South Carolina where animosity stemmed from personal as well as political differences, the policy of harassment and abuse of loyalists led to a cycle of retribution on the part of the partisans that would prevent any compromise in the face of either occupation by the British or eventual victory by either side.

The British military had an inkling of the conditions they were facing in the countryside, but an overly optimistic view of the solution. At the highest level, British leadership understood the necessity of earning the cooperation of the entire population in order to continue the campaign; however, by permitting abuses by junior leaders and loyalists seeking revenge, the slim possibility of truly subduing the Carolinas was lost. By attempting to return the colony to actively embrace royal authority prematurely, the military leadership mistook a willingness to accept parole as acceptance of restoration of British rule and in an unconscious imitation of the despised Association oaths, succeeded in further antagonizing the people.

This thesis shows the conditions set by civil and military authorities influenced the partisan war in the American Revolution and exacerbated the use of violence as a norm in the process of controlling the population. Some subordinate questions will be addressed such as:

How did perceptions of class and value to the colonial society as a whole affect personal and organizational conduct; what factors were considered in a person deciding whether to remain loyal to the Crown or choose to challenge its authority; what role did the experiences of the French and Indian and Cherokee Wars play; and how did the partisan and regular units' organization and leadership affect their conduct toward civilians and combatants?

Chapter 1 is the introduction and will contain a discussion of the research questions and provide the basis for an examination of the war, followed by the historical development of North and South Carolina, the demographic makeup of the colonies, and the early class divisions and popular perception in Chapter 2. Fundamental is the process of development of governments, law and order and loyalties therein.

Chapter 3 will examine the military history of the Carolinas prior to the American Revolution, reviewing the methods employed in quelling conflicts with the Native Americans, and introducing the military backgrounds of its several key leaders.

The partisan outside the context of the resistance to the British is presented in Chapter 4. The conduct of the loosely based organizations terrorizing the backcountry led to an increased level of acts committed against civilians and rivals for personal vice military reasons.

The military effects on the partisan war conducted against the British are examined in Chapter 5.

Conclusions and an evaluation of the partisan war as a component of Greene's Southern Campaign are presented in Chapter 6. Further, the concluding chapter will discuss the application of lessons learned to contemporary operating environment.

Central to this thesis is an understanding of the nature of a partisan. The ideal of the American partisan has been romanticized, strongly appealing the national self-image of the independent citizen-soldier taking up arms to protect his country. The question becomes, what is a partisan?

*Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines a partisan as: (1) a firm adherent to a party, faction, cause, or person; especially: one exhibiting blind, prejudiced, and unreasoning allegiance; or (2) member of a body of detached light troops making forays and harassing an enemy or a member of a guerrilla band operating within enemy lines. In the literature, the composite of the groups is covered under appellations from bandit to militia to partisan.

In the Revolutionary War south, the partisans made up two basic groups. First, armed bands that operated outside the control of military organizations, harassing proponents of the opposing view for personal reasons. In this group were the loose organizations involved in retribution for past conflict, perceived and real. The lack of any governmental or military censure of their actions encouraged the practices. The second group consisted of partisans composed predominantly of the remnants of the militia usually operated independently of the Continental Army; however, they pursued more military type operations. As militia units, many of the members of this group had participated in the skirmishes and battles that ensured the complete suppression of loyalists under the orders of the Council of Safety. Likewise, it should be noted the British light troops are equally partisans under the definition as their operations indicate, however will not be considered as such herein.

The eventual rise of the partisan stemmed from the divide between colonists in response to the multiple Acts of Parliament designed to assist the Crown in paying debts, then punish the colonies for their rebellious response. The response across the colonies varied, including the quasi-organized mob actions that occurred for a decade in the New England and Middle Colonies, including the horrible but sometimes survivable tar and feathering and “riding the rails,” and the imprisonment of opponents in subhuman conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Initially, South Carolina appeared to be ambivalent about the use of rapidly created bands of men as a means of exercising political will. Consider two incidents in the Stamp Act controversy. When the stamped papers were delivered to royal officials at Charleston’s Fort Johnson, for example, a raid was organized and carried out by several respected members of the community without bloodshed. The offending papers were sent back to the ship that had delivered them and removed from the colony, without any public disturbance.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, rumors circulated that some of the stamped papers had been delivered to government officials in Charleston. As a result, an unruly crowd assembled and marched on the homes of the three suspect royal officials. The crowd demanded to be allowed to search the homes. Two men allowed the search (one even offered refreshments) but the third, Henry Laurens, refused. He denied possession of the stamped papers, and they would have to take his word for he would not permit them to disturb his home. He invited them to investigate the outlying buildings and his cellars, which they did, with the only effect of consuming or destroying much of his alcohol stored in the cellars.<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1770's similar actions occurred in all colonies, however as one moved south and west, organized targeting of non-conformist groups began to take a more serious turn. Convening the First Continental Congress in 1774, the colonies agreed collectively to form a Continental Association to support a complete boycott of all British goods and services.<sup>9</sup> Effectively, it served to single out those who supported the Patriot cause, and those who did not. In South Carolina and Georgia, the attempts to enforce the Association by the newly formed Committees of Safety sowed the first seeds of the discord that would follow.

The passage of the Continental Association and the colonies' response had the colonists publicly declaring sides. The oft-quoted estimate was that approximately one-third of the American population fell into each category of opinion: Patriot, Loyalist, neutral.<sup>10</sup> Of the three, the neutral found themselves in a predicament, caught between high passions on both sides. After Lexington and Concord, the decision to sign the Association or not took the additional meaning of whether you would be considered a traitor to your new nation or to the Crown. The calling up of local militias urged by the Second Continental Congress forced the issue, as the call ups consolidated the patriots' power under the guise of mustering for the defense of the colony, for militia musters provided an opportunity for indoctrination and assertion of peer pressure on wavering colonists.

The militia organization served as a bellweather of the community, as the political leanings of the elected officers reflected the preference of the community as a whole. The call up effectively singled out the leaders to be targeted by the Councils of Safety as a threat. The decisive early organization of the patriots allowed them to assume control of

the colonial government and military, marginalize the loyalists, and forward the revolutionary cause. In doing so, most of the positions of power remained in the hands of the coastal planters and merchants, already predisposed to discount the concerns of the backcountry. The planters grip on the colony stemmed from the initial settlement and resulting class structures. The history of the development of community and government provided the foundation of the conflict in the southern theater. The civil war conducted by the partisans in the backcountry of the Carolinas and Georgia has been recognized as among the bloodiest in the American Revolution. The use of organized groups, regardless of the ad hoc establishment merely reflected the next step in the increasingly strident disagreements between Great Britain and her American colonies.

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<sup>1</sup>*Small Wars Manual United States Marine Corps*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940: reprint, Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press), 15-16 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>2</sup>To avoid confusion, the terms patriot and loyalist will be used unless quoted.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Bernstein, "Europe Seems to Hear Echoes of Empires Past," *New York Times*, 14 April 2003, B13.

<sup>4</sup>Mark A. Clodfelter, "Between Virtue and Necessity: Nathanael Greene and the Conduct of Civil Military Relations in the South, 1780-1782," *Military Affairs* 52, no. 4 (October 1988): 169-170.

<sup>5</sup>John Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 105.

<sup>6</sup>Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969), 141-143.

<sup>7</sup>John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution from Its Commencement to the Year 1776, inclusive, Relating to the State of South Carolina and occasionally referring to the States of North Carolina and Georgia*, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1821; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 43-45 (page citations are to the reprint edition).



<sup>8</sup>Drayton, 47.

<sup>9</sup>Ray Raphael, *A People's History of the American Revolution* (New York: The New Press, 2001; First Perennial, 2002), 41.

<sup>10</sup>Raphael identifies the origin of the estimate as actually being John Adams' beliefs in support of Americans for the French Revolution, but lacking any other baseline, it is being used as a generalization. *Ibid.*, 183.

## CHAPTER 2

### SETTLEMENT AND CONFLICT

In 1670, the first colonists in Carolina landed at the mouth of the Ashley River.<sup>1</sup> The Carolina colony originally encompassed the area between the Chesapeake Bay and Spain's Florida territory. The colony would eventually divide into three: North Carolina (1691), South Carolina, and Georgia (1732). Settlement commenced in the late seventeenth century with immigration from Great Britain's West Indian colonies. English planters in the West Indies found space becoming scarce in their Barbados holdings and sought additional land for settlement and planting. Land grants provided an attraction for farmers and artisans, both from the West Indies and other colonies. The Lords Proprietor further sweetened the offer for indentured servants, who also received sizable grants upon completion of his term of service.<sup>2</sup> The primary settlements were in the coastal plain, slowly moving toward the western area of the colonies as new colonists those who completed their indenture sought land.<sup>3</sup> The gradual dominance of the planter elite drove settlement inland and increased the contact with the indigenous tribes.

Through the remainder of the seventeenth century, settlements continued to grow, especially as communities emigrated together. A large group of Dutch settlers relocated from the newly Anglicized New York in 1674.<sup>4</sup> The colony's next large group of emigrants settled along the Santee: the Huguenots. Having fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, they sought land in areas free from religious persecution.<sup>5</sup> Almost fifty years later, a group of Irish Protestants received a grant of twenty square miles on the Black River to construct a township. A Swiss businessman negotiated with the Crown for the establishment of a community on the Savannah, to be

the eponymous Purrysburg and in 1733 brought 120 of his countrymen, followed by 260 later in the same year.<sup>6</sup> Other community groups included Germans, arriving as indentured servants in 1735, who began farming for themselves after their three to five year service.<sup>7</sup> A second group of Germans came to the Carolinas under Royal grants after their original claims in Nova Scotia had been denied.

The successful cultivation of rice and indigo increased the need for slaves and land, which created a tremendous security concern, leading to more encouragement of settlement to assist in the control of slaves and provide for defense against the native Americans as the settlements began to encroach on the Indian line. By the mid-eighteenth century, colonists were arriving from other colonies. The middle country colonists often immigrated from the Chesapeake or Pennsylvania colonies, as well as moving west or south from the earlier Carolina settlements. The settlers coming from Pennsylvania tended to be the first generation Scotch-Irish.<sup>8</sup>

The availability of land attracted many, as land purchases on the frontiers ceased in Pennsylvania between 1735 and 1768.<sup>9</sup> The Scots-Irish were an unusual group in Carolina as a whole, for their reputation of fearless and adventurous and their pattern of settling and then moving on when settlements built up. In the seventeenth century, James I moved some Scots to Ireland with the intent of religious conversion of the country and providing a buffer, which mostly resulted in isolation. The experience encouraged many to move to the new world to make their fortune and to follow the movement of the frontier to the Carolinas.<sup>10</sup>

The early pattern of settlement in the colony based itself as a series of settlements working from the coast west. The strong points of Charleston, Wilmington and Savannah

served as the base of the movements, which the colonies originally apportioned to create defensive lines of settlement.<sup>11</sup> The maturation of all the colonies changed the pattern, as more routes opened in the interior, allowing settlers to avoid the coasts altogether. The path to the Carolinas from the northern colonies brought settlers through the back door of the frontier, as they came down through the valleys and foothills of the Appalachian and Blue Ridge mountains, vice moving inland along rivers from a seaport. The Pennsylvania settlements had reached the Allegheny mountain range, the valleys running the length of the Appalachians serving as a natural funnel to the Carolina piedmont areas. This caused a population increase on the fringes of the colonies, barely under the control of any authority, and disrupted the overall plan. The base of the outer settlements was occasionally a church, often the livestock corrals, or cow pens.

As communities, the lack of civic structures correlated with a general lack of law enforcement. Equally traumatic to the frontier settlement was the apparent indifference of the colonial government to their problems. The members of the Common House of Assembly, the locally elected piece of the government, came from the upper two classes of society, with the colony divided in such a way that the newly settled backcountry had no representation and essentially no law enforcement. The traveling justices of the peace held hearings in local taverns, as they were the largest of the communal structures. Even if a man wanted to bring action against another, he had to balance the time and risk associated with travel to the nearest hearings and the high fixed fees of both the lawyers and the court officials.

An example of the associated problem was when a group of militia successfully captured a group of outlaws in 1766, they escorted them to the nearest court, two weeks

away, in Charleston. Upon the conviction, the newly appointed governor pardoned them to show his benevolence to the colony.<sup>12</sup> Rather than promoting goodwill, such pardons confirmed the backcountry settlements' conviction that the Assembly neither knew nor cared about their situation.

These disparities led to the rise of two separate movements of groups calling themselves Regulators, in each of the Carolinas, with a different agenda and result in each case. Throughout the 1760s and 1770s, movement into the backcountry continued, not only of those seeking to establish themselves but also those who recognized the opportunity to gain from the conditions.

In North Carolina, a different dynamic occurred in its western provinces, with the same name as the South Carolina movement. In spite of the isolation of the interior of North Carolina, it had become fairly well developed. There were both circuit and local court systems in place, although the courts were often at the extremities of the district. The system was incestuous, however, with the county clerk of pleas appointing local clerks and local sheriffs. The royal governor granted the positions to the county clerks, who often moved up to the House of Assembly, determined taxes.<sup>13</sup> For all intents and purposes, the local judicial and legislative branches were the same person. Tax collection occurred when the sheriff showed up at the doorstep, however a chronic shortage of currency left destitute colonists with no cash on hand. The result was the seizure of their property. The sheriffs pocketed a portion of the public funds and colonist pleas for redress met with little interest or action on the part of the colonial government. On top of this, local officials and lawyers charged hefty fees for their services.<sup>14</sup> The North

Carolina Regulators wanted redress for what they considered unfair and inappropriate taxation.

In this case, the Regulators petitioned the government for reforms between 1768 and 1770, fending off the sheriffs, disrupting courts and trying to acquire better representation in the House of Assembly to rectify the problems. Eventually the unsuccessful peaceful attempts to gain relief gave way to riots upon the imprisonment of several leaders attempting to prosecute a corrupt royal official in the spring of 1771. As the House of Assembly worked on legislation to both quell rioting and fix the legal problems, a group of Regulators decided a show of arms was required, in response to which North Carolina Governor Tryon mustered the militia and marched out to meet them. When Tryon refused to negotiate, some of the Regulator leaders suggested everyone go home, however their followers stood fast, until the militia opened fire. At the ensuing Battle of Alamance, the Regulators mustered approximately 2,000 men to Tryon's 1,000, but only half the Regulators were actually armed. With losses of nine killed on each side and many others wounded, the battle ended with Tryon remaining firmly in charge. The movement disbanded and Tryon moved to his next post, New York.<sup>15</sup>

In the same period, the South Carolina Regulators were established to counteract the general lawlessness of the frontier. The communities and dispersed farms had to cope with the omnipresent Indian threat, as settlement had moved over the Indian Line and into Cherokee territory. Additionally, the lack of law enforcement and variation in size and proximity of farms and town lent itself an inability to defend against outlaws. The actions of the Regulators suggest that at least some of the thieves were functioning

members of the frontier society and seizing the opportunity of profit.<sup>16</sup> The frontier communities had requested assistance against the marauders from the General Assembly in 1768, but nothing beyond verbal support ever arrived. The backcountry leaders formed the Regulators to punish the outlaws and anyone who abetted them. The Regulators brought order to the frontier, but without check on their authority the movement deteriorated into vigilantism, often against innocent settlers.

Far too late to productively influence the situation, the General Assembly conceded the gravity of the problem and sent out a deputation to arrest the leaders. Unfortunately, they sent a number of people who had grudges to bear or who were unacceptable to the populace as representatives of the law, and Governor Montagu had to rescind their warrants. The deputies sent to arrest the Regulators were often men not respected in the communities due to their questionable behavior, and they often used the opportunity to plunder their former opponents. The Regulators in turn arrested the deputies, outraging the Assembly, however forcing redress of the root problem. The General Assembly managed to set up a judicial system in the area by 1769, but the distrust and feeling of isolation from the rest of the colony remained.<sup>17</sup> The backcountry also did win representation in the Houses of Assembly, although such residents were still looked upon as backwards and lawless. The Regulators eventually disbanded, but members and victims of the movement had developed irreconcilable grudges, which enforced distrust within the loosely defined communities.

At South Carolina's centennial in 1770, the early settlers had created a society of affluence which controlled the legislative and economic systems. As settling colonists gradually moved toward the Piedmont, the disparities began to grow between those who

controlled the provincial government and those who were on the frontiers, both literally and metaphorically. In his history of the American Revolution, Charles Stedman describes the inhabitants of the Carolinas:

And in most of the southern colonies, he will meet with a people of pallid complexion and swarthy hue, of form rather tall and slender, unfit and unaccustomed to labor, with an aversion to business, and a fondness for pleasure and dissipation; luxurious, showy and expensive; yet sensible, shrewd and intelligent; of open and friendly dispositions, and in their houses hospitable even to extremity. But this must be understood only of the seacoast and interior parts of the Southern colonies.

For the frontiers of these, reaching far to the westward, extending over various ridges of high mountains and bordering on Indian country, are inhabited by people unacquainted with luxury and refinement, active and vigorous with minds fierce and intractable, and habits bearing some resemblance to their savage neighbors.<sup>18</sup>

The planters from the West Indies in the coast created a society based on a primarily agrarian economy, which deeply affected the societal structure. Planting in an unforgiving climate required a sustained pool of labor. Indentured servants filled some of that need, but slaves would supply a preponderance of the labor force. In the twenty years preceding the Revolution, an estimated 43,695 slaves were imported into South Carolina.<sup>19</sup> Of that, the largest concentration of slaves was on the coastal plantations providing labor at a cost that gave the planters an economic advantage over the non-slave owning farmers and artisans.<sup>20</sup> Possession of slaves was one of the economic indicators of the status of a man in the early days of the colonies, for beyond the implicit financial well being of ownership, the slaves entitled a man to more land when setting up his claim.<sup>21</sup>

The thriving planters and early businessmen became the elite, stratifying the classes of the colonial settlement. The tiers of society started with the planters on the top,



successful merchants and professionals forming the next tier, and the less skilled and successful below them.<sup>22</sup> In society's eyes at the lowest levels were the unruly "crackers" of the frontier,<sup>23</sup> barely better than the slaves and Native Americans. The planter elite's self-image as the colonial aristocracy increased as they compared themselves to the poor backcountry farmer performing the same labor as slaves.

All colonial slave based economies faced to security concerns especially after a September 1739 incident where a band of African Americans took over a warehouse, killing the two guards and taking all guns and ammunition. Although they were rapidly tracked and captured, it was called an uprising that left an indelible print on the minds of the white population, increasingly aware of their vulnerability to uprisings.<sup>24</sup> Some slaves were captives from the various Indian wars, adding to the general unease. The slave population outnumbered their masters by almost three to one by 1770.<sup>25</sup>

The confrontation with Great Britain aggravated the stress on an already strained colonial society. The choice of an individual to be a Patriot or a Loyalist came from as many factors as there were people in the colonies. In his study of Loyalists, William Nelson observed that sympathies were often linked to cultural minorities that became more Patriot as they became more Anglicized.<sup>26</sup> The recent immigrants, especially if a language barrier existed, feared the increased power of the majority and had an already heightened feeling of insecurity. The populations that had relocated as groups, or with strong cultural ties formed small societies, especially among those who had emigrated from other colonies also tended to advocate a position as a group.<sup>27</sup>

In the Carolina backcountry, some cultural minorities supported that idea, such as the Highlanders from North Carolina that were routed at Moore's Creek Bridge in 1775.

The German settlements also threatened the unity of the colony. They had not been treated badly by the Crown, and as for the hue and cry about taxation without representation, the low country dominated Provincial Congress was equally guilty.<sup>28</sup> Another source of loyalty to the Crown for the new arrivals was the idea that they had been given their lands in exchange for their word to support King and country. In many communities, no other argument was required.<sup>29</sup>

Conversely, the entire church led by Reverend William Martin in Rocky Creek joined the patriot cause at his urging, just as they had followed him from Ulster.<sup>30</sup> As a collective group, the Scots-Irish took up arms on both sides. Although Lord Rawdon led Loyalist troops called the Volunteers of Ireland, he wrote to Tarleton that in the Waxhaws “the Irish were the most averse of all settlers to the British government.”<sup>31</sup>

Some of the Loyalists’ opposition came from experiences with the Councils of Safety and the actions of their enthusiastic followers, regardless of sanction. Royster suggests that loyalists believed most Americans were actually loyalists who had been bullied into espousing the patriots’ views after suffering the abuses of the “oppressive zealots who persecuted dissent” and regarded the Patriot cause as “a form of delusion or oppression of the mind.”<sup>32</sup> And this is not far fetched. Thomas Brown, of Augusta, exercised his supposed right to toast the King, and was tar and feathered, beaten, partly scalped and burned. Not surprisingly, he fled Georgia, only to return with the British and a very large axe to grind.<sup>33</sup> William Cunningham, of the sobriquet “Bloody Bill,” leaned toward the patriot cause until a band of marauding Patriots started killing his family members.<sup>34</sup> South Carolina’s Indian agent, Richard Pearis was arrested by the Committee of Safety for reputedly stirring up the Indians while serving as their representative,<sup>35</sup> and Daniel

McGirth (also spelled McGeart) abandoned the patriot militia for a perceived insult by his company commander, who he felt was condescending.<sup>36</sup>

Slighted ambition may have been the key to more than one convert a chosen cause, as in the case of William Henry Drayton who became an increasingly more vocal proponent of resistance following his suprecession as a judge and suspension from the colony's Privy Council after writing a pamphlet questioning the Stamp Act.<sup>37</sup> Pickens thought that not commissioning Robert Cunningham as a militia leader to fight the Indian threat led to his taking up arms and becoming a successful leader under the British occupation.<sup>38</sup>

Participants in the North Carolina Regulator movement tended toward Loyalism. First, they had taken a loyalty oath to the Crown after Alamance, however the validity of oaths under duress would be questionable during the Revolution. More likely, it was due to the fact that some of their earlier adversaries were the same men now espousing resistance to the Crown. Many of the leaders of the newly forming American regiments had been militia at Alamance, such as Robert Howe and James Moore. The Regulators had little faith a new government of many of the same people who had disregarded their rights.<sup>39</sup>

Many of the colonists chose a particular side for pragmatic reasons. The adoption by the Provincial Congress of the Continental Association helped force the issue in 1775. The Association advocated non-importation, establishment of militia independent of British control and the establishment of local provincial government separate from the British for collection and allocation of public money. The Association followed the Suffolk (Massachusetts) Resolves and forced the people to make a decision as to the

course of action they would advocate.<sup>40</sup> The Council of Safety in South Carolina, for example, discovered that much of the militia in the backcountry under Col. Thomas Fletchall not only opposed signing the Association, but wrote their own articles of Non-Association.<sup>41</sup> The residents of the backcountry in all probability did not care either way--one report to the Council of Safety remarked that they were “hostile toward or disinterested in any movement that suggested independence.”<sup>42</sup>

In order to convince them of the rectitude of the Association cause, the Council of Safety sent a mission to the backcountry communities led by William Henry Drayton. The source of Drayton’s enthusiasm for the cause may have been loss of his position in the Privy Council, but as a patriot he brought to bear powerful powers of persuasion. As the representative of the newly formed provincial government, the Council of Safety gave him authority to call up militia as required, a license he used liberally to both summon an audience and to intimidate fence sitters.<sup>43</sup> Drayton’s tactics were somewhat effective, however his heavy handedness did not endear his cause to the residents. In his report to the Council of Safety on the meeting with the Dutch (Germans) he described them as “so much averse to take up arms, as they imagined against the King, least they should lose their lands; and were so possessed with an idea that the rangers were posted here to force their signatures. . . . [T]hey would not by any arguments be induced to come near us.”<sup>44</sup>

That the South Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress had successfully lobbied for rice, the primary cash crop of the coastal area, to be exempt from non-importation could not have escaped the notice of the backcountry farmers, growing crops they may not be able to sell. Beyond the implied threat, economic sanction provided a tool for forcing compliance, as Drayton exhorted subscribers to the Association not to

traffic or offer services (such as milling) to nonsubscribers at Kings Creek, and from Lawson's Fork recommended no goods be transshipped to McLaurin's store as he was a non-subscriber. His partner subscribed, Drayton continued, but suspected it is only for them to play both sides.<sup>45</sup> In the same report, Drayton continued that if even a few of the recalcitrant leaders are allowed to remain free, the entire cause is undermined. In Georgia's provincial congress, among the resolutions was one to send the names of non-subscribers to the Continental Congress for publication to ensure they would be shunned.<sup>46</sup>

The decisions of loyalists and patriots in 1774 and 1775 would become more important and have far more tragic consequences as the conflict moved from rhetoric to violence across the colonies. That violence would become an accepted tool is seen in a postscript of a letter to Drayton from Arthur Middleton after the report of the German response, "I confess I have not the slightest hope of your succeeding in that quarter; my opinion is, that we shall at last be obliged to have recourse to your device and motto (an arm with a sword)."<sup>47</sup>

The spread and success of the patriot cause in the crucial early days of 1774 and 1775 can be attributed to several factors. First, regardless of who had more numbers, the patriot leaders organization beat that of the loyalists without question. With the Continental Association among its tools, the Council of Safety set an agenda and carried it out efficiently and without compunction. Crown officials in the Carolinas and Georgia simply could not compete against a relatively united front. Patriot leaders had a superb understanding of how to control dissenters and utilize standing organizations to advance their cause. An early example of the effective silencing of opposition comes from the

experiences of a minister in Charleston. Reverend John Bullman, the assistant at the venerable Saint Michael's, delivered a sermon advocating passive obedience to the Crown and its legislative actions. His notes were requested by some members to verify if he had made any anti-patriot seditious remarks, at which he declared they were welcome to his notes, but he would not permit them to dictate his thoughts. His parishioners dismissed him by a vote of 42-33 in a vestry meeting.<sup>48</sup>

Patriot leaders swiftly established control regardless of whether a majority existed as the loyalists consistently lost ground in the early years due to an inability to or disinterest in effective organization. The militia served as the only coherent organization, quickly defeated and disbanded by a combination of political appointments of leaders sympathetic to the patriot cause or outright defeat in battle. Effective use of organizations such as the Sons of Liberty as well as dominating the provincial governments recommended by the First Continental Congress ensured the loyalist resistance would be unable to coalesce. Councils of Safety meted out punishment to recalcitrant merchants through economic reprisal, ostracism, or violence, which left the loyalist humiliated and at least temporarily defeated.<sup>49</sup> In spite of mob violence, loyalists overall tended to try to stay out of the fray.<sup>50</sup> Few strong loyalist leaders emerged, and with the disparate reasons for supporting the Crown, no cohesion appeared. While patriot leaders tended to communicate with their peers throughout the colonies, loyalism was a localized phenomenon. Politically and often culturally isolated, the excesses of the patriots only served to move the loyalists closer to Britain as a perceived source of security, which made them less credible to their patriot peers. Losing credibility increased reluctance to speak out in favor of Britain, a process that fed upon itself.<sup>51</sup>

By marginalizing the loyalist sector of the population, the patriot leadership could portray them as less enlightened, illiterate, backwards, or any number of equally denigrating terms. In doing so, they cast the loyalist in the eyes of the populace generally supporting the cause. After the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, traitor was added to the list of epithets. Once the colonies had declared themselves independent, the loyalists for all intents resided on soil where they were now regarded as the enemy. Eventually the average patriot would be unable to see them as anything but traitors and lost traditional relationship between neighbors. In the backcountry, already fractured by decades of personal and political animosity, this provided another charge with which to turn on adversaries.

The influence of social and civic order provided motivation for revolutionary and counter-revolutionary actions. The perceived lack of interest in the backcountry population led to vigilante movements, an early form of the partisans that would carry out the civil war. The conduct of the civil war, however, was equally a function of the military experience of most Carolinian leaders. The militia leaders of 1775 learned about warfare in their relations with the Native Americans and training received in the French and Indian and Cherokee Wars.

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<sup>1</sup>Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 224.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 225-226.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 224-225.

<sup>4</sup>David Ramsay, *A History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670 to the year 1808* (Newberry, SC: W. J. Duffie, 1858; reprint Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1959), 1: 3 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina under the Royal Government 1719-1776* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969, reprint of Russell and Russell 1899 edition), 126 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>8</sup>Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict that Turned the Tide of the American Revolution* (New York: Perennial Books, 2003), 4.

<sup>9</sup>Wayland F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1944; reprint Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2002), 103 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>10</sup>John Spencer Bassett, *The Regulators of North Carolina (1765-1771) Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1894*. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; 146-147 [report on-line]; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/basset95/basset95.htm>; Internet.

<sup>11</sup>Edgar, 11.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>13</sup>Bassett, p 148

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 139-145.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 190-205.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 17-19.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 16-18.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origins, Progress and Termination of the American War*, vol. 1, *Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution* (London: by the author, 1794; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1968), 4-5 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>19</sup>McCrady, 381.

<sup>20</sup>M. F. Treacy, *Prelude to Yorktown: The Southern Campaign of Nathanael Greene 1780-1781* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 7.



<sup>21</sup>Taylor, 225.

<sup>22</sup>Lambert, 8.

<sup>23</sup>John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (New York: Gorian Press, Inc., 1966), 215.

<sup>24</sup> McCrady, 185.

<sup>25</sup>John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 22

<sup>26</sup>William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961; reprint Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 89 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>27</sup>Dunaway, 110.

<sup>28</sup>John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 74.

<sup>29</sup>Treacy, 7.

<sup>30</sup>Edgar, 63.

<sup>31</sup>Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (London: T. Caddell, 1787; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 86 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>32</sup>Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 263.

<sup>33</sup>Robert McKee Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), 454.

<sup>34</sup>Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 87.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>36</sup>Bassett, 149-155.

<sup>37</sup>R.W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution 1764-1776*, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (New York: D. Appleton and

Company, 1855; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 39 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>38</sup>Buchanan, 95

<sup>39</sup>Bassett, 209-210.

<sup>40</sup>Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, eds., *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (New York: HarperCollins Press, 1975; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 53-55 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>41</sup>Lambert, 36.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>44</sup>W. H. Drayton to South Carolina Council of Safety, 7 August, 1775, in Gibbes, 1:28.

<sup>45</sup>W. H. Drayton to South Carolina Council of Safety, 16 August, 1775 and 21 August, 1775, *Ibid.*, 141, 150.

<sup>46</sup>Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 59.

<sup>47</sup>Gibbes, 1:137.

<sup>48</sup>Drayton, 142-3.

<sup>49</sup>John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution 1763-1789, A History of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957; reprint 1976), 179 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>50</sup>Ray L. Bowers Jr., "The American Revolution: A Study in Insurgency," *Military Review* 46, no. 7 (1966): 66.

<sup>51</sup>Nelson, 19.

## CHAPTER 3

### NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE MILITIA

Besides the European groups and slaves, another significant sector of the population effecting the settlement of the colonies and their policies were the Native Americans. Approximately twenty different tribes inhabited the area, including the Westoe, Yemassee, Tuscarora, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Edisto. The range of these tribes covered the entire colony, coast to mountains. The continued progress inland of settlers brought them into contact, then conflict, as frontier life began to encompass the Indian Wars. The early colonial years in Carolina were marked by small, localized conflicts with the various tribes, as clashing ideas of property created tensions. Carolina faced the first conflict ten years into its settlement, conducting a successful campaign against the Westoe tribe in 1680.<sup>1</sup> Combined colonial and allied Indian forces maintained pressure on the Florida and their allies, combining for a war against the Apalachee or Apalachian tribes in Georgia. The destruction of the villages and Spanish missions led to enslavement of most of the tribe by 1706.<sup>2</sup>

Ten years later, in North Carolina, the Tuscarora, frustrated with repeated slave raids by and encroachment of settlers, viewed these events with alarm and launched a campaign against the English settlers.<sup>3</sup> The combined militias of North and South Carolina crushed the uprising, and the tribal communities were destroyed by fire and sword, a recurring theme throughout the next century. In the attack on the main village, the militia executed the male inhabitants and transported the women and children to Charles Town as slaves.<sup>4</sup> These were not the wars of Europe, for the measure of victory

was dead and enslaved, vice paroled. The colonies' next threat came from a tribe that had been allied with them in several of the Indian campaigns, the Yemassee in 1715. Defeated by the combined forces of the colonists and the Cherokee, the remnants of the tribe fled to Florida.<sup>5</sup> The Cherokee felt the pressure of the increasing colonial population, as the colonists slowly forced the westward trek of the tribe toward the mountains until checked by royal decree. Attitudes toward the Native Americans governed their treatment in war.

Dr. David Ramsay in his South Carolina history remarks, "While the English thought little of Indian rights to land, the latter were equally regardless of the rights of the former to moveable property."<sup>6</sup> He goes on to describe the prevalent view of Indians as killing indiscriminately in retribution for any one killed, whether deliberately or accidentally, a frontier eye-for-an-eye philosophy. The Royal Governor went to the extent of placing a bounty on Indians brought in, with the captives sold into slavery in the West Indies.<sup>7</sup> Exporting Indian captives solved the problem of fears of escape or Indian raids to liberate them, as well as provided a means of exchange for African slaves, reputedly at an exchange of two Indians per African.<sup>8</sup>

Although the British provided better trade goods, the Indian tribes preferred dealing with the French who treated them as near equals and adapted to their way of life on the frontier, vice the English settlers who were proud.<sup>9</sup> A Carolinian noted that local Indians never failed to assist when settlers were hungry or thirsty, and the settlers never failed to scorn returning the favor. He pointed out that colonists looked down on the Indians as little more than savages, while commenting that his peers were probably more morally corrupt.<sup>10</sup> This is of note, for in the conduct of the Indian conflicts, the level of

terror implied the militia felt the enemy was of a lower race, and therefore the message would be stronger.

Outnumbered by the Indians from the start, the colonists played the tribes against each other whenever possible and watched how the wars were fought. Lieutenant Henry Timberlake lived briefly with the Cherokee while on a mission to deliver a copy of the peace agreement after the Cherokee War. He commented that while they were friendly to him, no longer a foe, they were “implacable with their enmity, their revenge being only completed [*sic*] in the entire destruction of their enemies.”<sup>11</sup> In the same description, he continues that until encouraged by the colonists to bring in scalps, the practice of scalping had been limited to inveterate enemies. Civilians often became the victims of raiding parties on both sides on the American frontier; part of the impetus of the mass movement of the Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania was the disinterest in the Quakers to the east in assisting in the protection of the western settlements.<sup>12</sup>

On the eve of the American Revolution, the average male in the southern colonies had combat experience in one or several of the small frontier wars, if not the French and Indian War. The colonies had a strong militia tradition developed for mutual defense in an occasionally very hostile environment. While the militias in some of the northern colonies devolved into social clubs, those on the western and southern edges of the colonies were still active in 1775. The European Americans considered the Indians, even their allied nations, savages and treated them as such.

Ensuing years were filled with skirmishes with the Indians, especially when operating against combined Indian and Spanish forces; but, it was the French and Indian War that provided the training for many of the men who would rise to fame in the

American Revolution. The North American extension of the Seven Years War, the colonists in the Carolinas and Georgia supported England's fight by fighting a campaign against Indians allied with the French along the frontier. The combined regular British troops and militia fought both French regulars and Indians in the woods and mountains, generally not in the open fields which characterized European battlefields. The adaptation of traditional European warfare to the lessons of the Indian wars was made exceptionally lethal by the ability of the colonists and British to act as a cohesive unit, opposed to the loosely organized Native Americans.<sup>13</sup>

Many military leaders of the Revolution learned to fight in this conflict: George Washington, Daniel Morgan, and Thomas Sumter in the Virginia militia; Andrew Pickens, Andrew Williamson, William Moultrie, and Francis Marion in the South Carolina militia; and William Richardson Davie in the North Carolina militia. Sumter, then a sergeant, would gain the additional experience of living with the Cherokee as part of Timberlake's mission to deliver the peace agreement.<sup>14</sup> The leaders brought this experience to the conflict with the Cherokee and then to the battlefields of the American Revolution.

The Cherokee War in the Carolinas started on the heels of the cessation of the French and Indian War. Mistreatment of the Cherokees returning home after service with the British caused the tribe to attack along the southern frontier, opening an attack on a group of colonial women fleeing to safety near Waxhaws.<sup>15</sup> Fighting a campaign to destroy the settlements encroaching on their territory, the Cherokee found their own settlements destroyed by the colonial militia, a loss of Cherokee rights, and the establishment of western boundary of settlement farther into Cherokee country.<sup>16</sup>

Reports of Indian atrocities against captives influenced the willingness of colonists to bring the fire and the sword to their opponents. In the Cherokee Wars, the colonists laid waste to Indian communities, destroying crops and killing all they found.<sup>17</sup> In 1776, when the Cherokee attacked along the colonial frontier as part of a British plan to link up the Indians and British regulars to be landed in North Carolina, the colonists' worst fears were realized. Rapidly formed patriot militia captured much of the raiding party at Ninety-Six. The presence of several loyalists among the raiding party terrorizing the frontier without regard to political affiliation certainly provided an excuse for retribution against loyalists. Reverend Jasper Creswell noted that the randomness of the killing had been "providential," for it drove some of the wavering loyalists into the patriot fold for protection.<sup>18</sup>

Typical of these wars Drayton's were the instructions as a member of the provincial government to the expedition marching to join the forces of North Carolina and Virginia in putting down the Cherokee uprising. He told them to: "cut down every Indian corn-field and burn every Indian town -- and that every Indian taken shall be the slave and property of the taker; that the nation be extirpated and the lands become the property of the public."<sup>19</sup> These directions from the Council of Safety and Provincial Congress bear a striking resemblance to what both the patriot and loyalists will eventually be inflicting on each other.

The military history of the southernmost colonies reveals as to how they were conditioned to think about and conduct the fight. The conflict with the Native Americans came down to a struggle for survival and became an unlimited war. At a time when the armies of Europe fought more limited wars, Europeans and Americans assumed the

frontier attitude when fighting in the colonies.<sup>20</sup> By 1775, the South as a whole had almost a century of experience of fighting the Indians, the French, and the Spanish. Only in the French and Indian War had they had any substantial assistance from Great Britain. All able-bodied men were expected to serve in the militia and acquired some military experience. Militiamen met regularly to practice basic drill, usually after church. Service was not expected to exceed six months continuously,<sup>21</sup> an expectation that would bedevil Greene's campaign and provide endless headaches to the partisan leaders trying to maintain an effective fighting force.

The militia, when established, provided a means to protect the colony, but in the musters provided a means of determining allegiance. The provincial congresses aggressively used the militia system not only to move loyalists out of authority and install men sympathetic to the cause, but as a means of indoctrination and intimidation. Identification with a particular militia unit entailed identification with a political choice. Additionally, it allowed the Councils of Safety to have an armed organization on call to keep the revolution in motion after the initial fervor wore off.<sup>22</sup>

With the predominance of the fighting on the frontier, the eighteenth-century militia rarely needed to concern itself with the traditional drill practiced in Europe. British Legion commander Tarleton observed after his defeat of Continental forces under Buford as late as 1780 that had he formed his troops into a square and shot earlier, he may have made a better showing.<sup>23</sup> Buford commanded Continental troops, but with the lack of formal training outside militia call-ups, the concept may not have been familiar. Queen's Ranger leader Simcoe's description of the colonial troops as being averse to tactical arrangements and preferring ranging for the familiarity it provided from fighting



Indians on the North American terrain. He also commented on the quality of their marksmanship as a result.<sup>24</sup>

Janet Schaw, the sister of North Carolina loyalist Robert Schaw, described viewing a militia drill thus:

The soldiers, or what you please to call them. . . . Their exercise was that of bush-fighting, but it appeared so confused and so perfectly different from any thing I ever saw, I cannot say whether they performed it well or not; but this I know that they were heated with rum till capable of committing the most shocking outrages. We stood in the balcony of Doctor Cobham's house and they were reviewed on a field mostly covered with what are called here scrubby oaks, which are only a little better than brushwood. They at last however assembled on the plain field, and I must really laugh while I recollect their figures. . . . They made indeed a most unmartial appearance. But the worst figure there can shoot from behind a bush and kill even a General Wolfe. Before the review was over, I heard a cry of tar.<sup>25</sup>

Schaw's observations on the appearance and demeanor of the militia echo the sentiments of almost every observer outside the militia. In 1780, Horatio Gates expressed dismay at the figure cut by Francis Marion's men when they joined him, "very few followers, distinguished by small black leather caps and the wretchedness of their attire. . . .their appearance was in fact burlesque."<sup>26</sup>

These rag tag militias, however, had defeated some of the most ferocious of the southern Indians, defeated the Cherokee, and had fought alongside the British in the French and Indian War and the attempted assault on Cartagena in the War of Austrian Succession, while defending the Georgia frontier from Spanish attacks.<sup>27</sup>

The start of the war in the South came as a result of the first Treaty of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. Negotiated as a means to prevent bloodshed after a loyalist force mustered, it purported to assure loyalists they would not be disturbed as long as the agreed not to take up arms for any British forces.<sup>28</sup> Robert Cunningham, who had retired

to his farm to wait for the Governor's reaction, unwisely admitted to Drayton that he desired peace, but felt the Treaty of Ninety-Six was a dishonorable agreement and he did not feel bound to honor it. He went on to chide Drayton that he had expected Drayton to act with more honor than coercing a group of scared men with "the sight of liberty caps and the sound of cannon."<sup>29</sup>

Not one to be timid about using militia to further his political goals, Drayton seized the opportunity and had Cunningham arrested, which brought his brother and a group of loyalists to the field. Patrick Cunningham and his followers seized gunpowder intended to seal a peace with the Cherokee, resulting in a call-up of the militia under Williamson to retrieve the stores and put down the uprising. Outnumbered, Williamson's forces hastily built a fort at Ninety-Six, attacked in November by Patrick Cunningham.<sup>30</sup> The patriots renegotiated the Treaty of Ninety-Six, but before the provincial government could agree it upon, arrest warrants had already been sent on Cunningham and other leaders.

Drayton summoned more militia to relieve Williamson, as loyalists flocked to Cunningham, with about 1,500 to 2,000 loyalists appearing against 1,200 patriots.<sup>31</sup> As Drayton and Williamson marched toward Ninety-Six, they arrested loyalist leaders, including Fletchall, until the uprising was quelled. The background of the captives demonstrates the varying sources of loyalists: fifteen had been in the militia, the largest community group was from the upper Saluda River with smaller groups from Ninety-Six; they were ethnically diverse but almost uniformly arrivals since the end of the Cherokee War.<sup>32</sup>

Concurrently, in North Carolina, Governor Martin convinced British leaders that if the army made a strong showing, all the loyalists would rise up and put down the rebellion. Clinton was dispatched to meet with the loyalists; by the time of his arrival the willingness of loyalist forces to rise and fight had been effectively crushed. Martin put out a call for loyal forces to muster and assemble in Wilmington to assist the anticipated British arrival. The settlers from the Highlands assembled and began their march, a cat and mouse game through the countryside seeking to avoid the patriot forces marching to check them. The loyal forces arrived at Moore's Creek Bridge to find it held by the patriot forces although apparently lightly. The initial force making the charge discovered three things. First, a larger force than anticipated was across the creek, second, the patriots had pulled up planks on the bridge, and third, the bridge had been greased. The charge became a rout.<sup>33</sup> The battle at Moore's Creek Bridge effectively undermined loyalist confidence in their ability as well as effectively crushed any hopes of a quick defeat of the patriots.

The absence of large-scale engagements hardly meant the absences of conflict. Even with the loyalist population firmly under control, periodic Indian raids or those of Thomas Brown and his East Florida Rangers, a loyalist group harassing the Georgia border, disturbed the relative quiet. The British assault on and capture of Savannah ended this period, as the threat became immediate as both loyalists and patriots answered their respective call to arms. From the fall of Savannah on, the war in the South would degenerate into a savage war of small battles and engagements that would make veterans, such as Cornwallis and Greene, blanch. Partisan groups outside of military organizations

fought the backcountry civil war, with their actions reflecting more personal motives than those fighting the British.

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<sup>1</sup>Ramsay, 87.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ramsay describes the attack of the Tuscarora in terms of massacre and slaughter. Regardless of the accuracy, it provides insight into the perception of Indian behavior and tactics, for Ramsay was born in the 1740s and probably heard many of the stories as a child.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, 234.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 234

<sup>6</sup>Ramsay, 85.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, 231.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 426.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lieutenant Henry Timberlake*, The First American Frontier (Johnson City, TN: Watuga Press, 1927; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1971), 78 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>12</sup>McCrary, 312.

<sup>13</sup>Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York: MacMillan, 1971; reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 3 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>14</sup>Timberlake, 41.

<sup>15</sup>McCrary, 343.

<sup>16</sup>Taylor, 434.

<sup>17</sup>Lambert, 9.

<sup>18</sup>Rev. Jasper Creswell to W. H. Drayton, 27 July, 1776 in Gibbes, 2: 31.

<sup>19</sup>W. H. Drayton to Francis Salvador, 24 July, 1776 Ibid., 2: 29.

<sup>20</sup>Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977), 19.

<sup>21</sup>Dan L. Morrill, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1993), 7.

<sup>22</sup>John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 177.

<sup>23</sup>Tarleton, 30.

<sup>24</sup>J. G. Simcoe, *A History of the Operations of a Partisan Corps called the Queen's Rangers*, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1844; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968), 75 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>25</sup>Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, ed. Evangeline Walker Andrews [Book on-line] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 190; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/schaw/>.

<sup>26</sup>Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 101.

<sup>27</sup>Taylor, 422.

<sup>28</sup>Lambert, 47.

<sup>29</sup>Robert Cunningham to W. H. Drayton, 5 October, 1775 in Gibbes, 1: 200.

<sup>30</sup>Edgar, 33.

<sup>31</sup>Lambert, 47.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>33</sup>Jac Weller, "The Irregular War in the South," *Military Affairs* 24, no. 3 (1960): 129-130.

## CHAPTER 4

### CIVIL WAR IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

A Quaker gentleman meeting with Cornwallis upon the fall of Charleston explained the rage of the loyalists toward their neighbors by describing the lives some had been forced to live. “There are some who have lived for two, and even three years in the woods . . . others having walked out of their houses, under a promise of being safe. . . .have been shot. Others have been tied to a tree and severely whipped.”<sup>1</sup> In the wake of Moore’s Creek Bridge and Ninety-Six, a violent struggle broke out for control of the population. The first partisans in the Revolutionary War south developed as a reaction to the break out of a civil war in the backcountry.

The suppression of the loyalists, as already noted, included attempts at forcing loyalty oaths, imprisonment of leaders under treason laws, and the outright intimidation by physical force. The patriots recognized that any dissent must be quickly broken and took action against potential leaders of any opposition. The Council of Safety pushed the loyalists were inexorably toward the fringes of society by ensuring militia units were led by those sympathetic the patriot cause. As the patriots gained the upper hand, the old grudges from the Regulator movements, as well as prejudices against different sects or religions surfaced and unleashed retribution in the name of politics.

The loyalists effectively lost the propaganda war early on in political upheaval of the 1770’s and never regained the momentum. The primary writers on the nature of the relationship with Great Britain came from the southern planter class, primarily the low country families that controlled the colonial lower houses of assembly. Through already existent prominence in the political and economic arenas, the patriots quickly brought

pressure to bear and enforced their ideas of what should be done, organizationally and in public debate.<sup>2</sup> The Sedition Law passed by the South Carolina General Assembly in the spring of 1776 promised the death penalty to any who took up arms with hostile intent; committed acts of violence, words or deeds to do the same; either communicated with or supplied the British or incited the Indians or slaves. Besides the death threat, property of those convicted would be sold to compensate for losses suffered fighting the British.<sup>3</sup>

With the counter association movement halted by the imprisonment of its leaders, and those undecided or leaning toward support of the Crown's position threatened with economic hardship or imprisonment, the opportunity existed for the backcountry to settle into stasis.

During his forays into the back country Drayton made clear what lengths the provincial government would be willing to go, mustering militia with the threat of prosecuting any officers who failed to appear and imprisonment to deserters from any militia unit.<sup>4</sup> His choice of words makes clear the low esteem in which he holds the residents, "haranguing" them at every opportunity. When meeting the aforementioned Thomas Brown, Drayton described him as angry and violent, as if Brown's resentment of his abuse at the by the Sons of Liberty was unreasonable.<sup>5</sup> In a letter from one of his peers, Drayton received an almost gleeful description of a tar and feathering on one of the coastal islands,<sup>6</sup> that the man in question suffered broken ribs and loss of sight in one eye, beyond the horrific complications of the tar and feather process,<sup>7</sup> seemed irrelevant. He seemed almost casual in his acknowledgement of the treatment of dissenters, as if they should have fully expected such behavior from their neighbors.

Janet Schaw described the method of coercion in North Carolina (although she writes about the coastal area, her observations were generally perceptive), as the officer of member of the Committee of Safety visited the plantation and proposed two alternatives: join us and you and your property will be safe, refuse and “we are directly to cut up your corn, shoot your pigs, burn your houses, seize your Negroes.”<sup>8</sup> Loyalists were afforded little protection when the local governments made the threats.

Increased regulation disenfranchised and penalized the loyalists, however the first blood shed by the British heightened the need to completely subdue dissenting segments of the population. The military action defined an enemy for specific action to be taken against. In his study of propaganda of the period, Davidson asserts that hate is the most important factor in war psychosis, “An unreasoning hatred, a blind disgust, is aroused not against policies, but people.”<sup>9</sup> Alexander Chesney and Tarleton Brown, loyalist and patriot respectively, each wrote about his experience in the American Revolution and justified his actions in the civil war.

Chesney provides some insight into the life of a loyalist in 1775. He fit the pattern of new immigrants tending be loyalists, having arrived from Ireland in October of 1772. From 1773 to 1775 his family increased in prosperity on their tract of land on the upper reaches of the Pacolet River, “without any particular occurrence . . . until 1775 that resolution were [*sic*] passed for signatures at the meeting House by the Congress Party, and I opposed them.” He discussed the Treaty of Ninety-Six, followed by the imprisonment of Fletchall and Mayfield--although under the protection of a truce. He tells of Richardson’s expedition to Ninety-Six, imprisoning some of the loyalist leaders and disarming the remainder under similar circumstances.<sup>10</sup>



Chesney served as a guide to loyalists joining the armed force Ambrose Mills attempted to form in North Carolina, until captured. Upon his release, the “Congress Party” still suspected his allegiance and offered the options of being tried or joining the Continental Army, of which he chose the latter. His choice was based on concern for his father’s family, which was already suffering for assisting loyalists.<sup>11</sup> He fought at the Battle of Sullivan’s Island, planning to desert to the British, but unable to find an opportunity.

Chesney then participated in the Indian campaigns, which he had no objection to, and “helped to destroy 32 towns of theirs (Cherokee) under Col. Williamson with Col. Sumpter.”<sup>12</sup> He would go on to campaign with the militia against the Creek and under Lincoln at Augusta in 1777, enlisting as a private but being elected as a first lieutenant by 1777. Upon the British occupation of Charleston, he promptly joined the loyalist militia forming under Balfour, who would pass command to Ferguson. Chesney recounts being involved in some fighting every day, until Kings Mountain, where he became a prisoner.

Chesney and New Jersey loyalist Anthony Allaire described the prisoners’ march toward Hillsboro, being beaten regularly and cut with swords as they marched up the road. Both men escaped, Chesney returning home to find little left and his wife with a newborn. He then hid in caves, was captured and exchanged, and sent by Cruger to scout for Tarleton. On his way to meet the British Legion, he found his and his father’s crops destroyed by Morgan’s troops. He found Tarleton at the Cowpens, fought in the battle and returned home to find “nothing left, not even a blanket to keep off the inclement weather or a change of garments.”<sup>13</sup>

A counterpoint is the story of Captain Tarleton Brown, drafted in the lottery of 1775 to raise troops for the forming of the Continental Army. After completing his obligation and serving as a substitute, he joined Harden's Rangers, then transferred to Thompson's Rangers, raiding into Georgia across the Savannah River.<sup>14</sup> He and some friends formed their own ranger company, attaching itself to various units as the spirit moved them, including service with Pickens and Marion. Among his war stories are two that illustrate the retribution of the loyalists on their oppressors. First, while traversing the lower runs of the Edisto, Brown and his rangers arrived at the home of 85-year-old Mr. Collins, known to be strictly neutral, "a very quiet and inoffensive man." A band of loyalist marauders had killed Mr. Collins and burned his home.<sup>15</sup> Second, he mentions McGeart's march from Georgia, where McGeart was accused of killing every man unwilling to swear allegiance to the King. Among McGeart's victims was Brown's father. Brown discovered his home destroyed and his sisters hiding in the woods, with no shelter or means of protecting themselves. His emotions at learning of the devastation to his family were typical of the rage running through the country: "my blood boiled within my veins, and my soul thirsted for vengeance."<sup>16</sup>

The remainder of his memoirs detail how he satisfied that desire, casually discussing operations where his men would capture and hang a loyalist or two, then flee from the dead man's companions, occasionally losing some of his men to similar treatment. And for every one he lost, the circle started again. Of course the loyalist partisans remained in an identical process loop.

The tale of "Bloody Bill" Cuninghame illustrates the mechanics of the increasing downward spiral of behavior. William Cuninghame served in the patriot militia, having

been commissioned with the understanding that he could resign whenever he desired. He rode to Charleston to resign and was imprisoned and tried. Although acquitted, the perceived as double-dealing destroyed his apparently mild leanings toward the patriot cause.<sup>17</sup> He became a fugitive, hunted especially by one of his brother's neighbors, a patriot, Captain Ritchie. Ritchie continually boasted about his intentions to harm Cuningham, whose brother convinced him to go to Savannah instead of fighting. Thwarted, Ritchie went to the home of another Cuningham brother, John, under the pretext of drafting him. Upon John's standing up to him due to being lame and epileptic, Ritchie and his men proceeded to beat him to death.<sup>18</sup> With his blood up, Ritchie then visited Cuningham's father and severely beat the ill man.

Cuningham walked back from Savannah, hunted down and killed Ritchie, and became an avenger of wrongs against the loyalists.<sup>19</sup> As the British withdrawal from the backcountry began, two of the patriot partisan leaders began to exact retribution on the families of Cuningham's men. Cuningham rode through the predominantly patriot area, evading capture, and killed the leaders and their men, including setting their houses on fire, and after promising safe passage if they surrender, sabered all of the escapees.<sup>20</sup>

Motivation for joining the fight determined the extent of participation in the civil war. Marion lost several men after banning reprisals on civilians, including Hugh Ervin, who went on a house-burning spree and Maurice Murphy, who killed his uncle for berating him over his behavior.<sup>21</sup> Murphy's rampage included riding to the home of a family whose sons were with a loyalist partisan group. When their father refused to reveal their location, Murphy tied him to a post and proceeded to whip him for declaring

his loyalty to King George. After three sets of fifty lashes, Murphy had to give up or kill him, which his men would not allow out of respect.<sup>22</sup>

The behavior of the vigilante partisans appalled the leadership of both sides. Marion wrote Greene to disavow association with the actions being attributed to his men dismissed for such unacceptable actions,<sup>23</sup> and Stedman deriding the actions of Brown's East Florida Rangers through Georgia and South Carolina as a predatory war motivated by plunder and revenge for the loss of their homes.<sup>24</sup> The patriot upper hand in the civil war reversed itself upon the occupation of Georgia and South Carolina by the British, however the problem of the vengeful loyalist population plagued the pacification attempts.

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<sup>1</sup>Stedman, 348.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 31.

<sup>3</sup>Lambert, 50.

<sup>4</sup>Gibbes, 128-131.

<sup>5</sup>Buchanan, 97.

<sup>6</sup>Gibbes, 137.

<sup>7</sup>North Callahan, *Royal Raiders: The Tories of the American Revolution* (New York: Bobbes-Merrill Company, 1963), 39.

<sup>8</sup>Schaw, 195.

<sup>9</sup>Davidson, 139.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Chesney, "The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After," ed. Alfred E. Jones, *The Ohio State University Bulletin* 26, vol. 4, (20 October, 1921): 4; [text online]; uniserve.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>14</sup>Tarleton Brown, *Memoirs of Tarleton Brown, a Captain in the Revolutionary Army* (New York: Privately printed, 1862) text-fiche, 10-11.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>17</sup>Callahan, 178.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>19</sup>Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 87.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Bass, *Swamp Fox: The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), 68.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 70

<sup>24</sup>Stedman, 67.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEADERS AND ORGANIZATION

The fall and occupation of Charleston in 1780 marked a change in the South Carolina civil war. The loyalists regained a temporary sense of security under the protection of the British troops and used it to exact retribution on their patriot tormenters. The British southern strategy relied on the active support of the loyalist population, but did not account for the difficulties in controlling loyalist actions as part of the civil war. In the Southern campaign in particular, the ability to provide security and maintain law and order was crucial to victory. The leaders of the partisans, the British and their loyalist allies, and the Continental army influenced the character of the war, as did the type of unit in any given skirmish or battle.

The first British campaign in the South started with an abortive attempt to rendezvous with loyalists in North Carolina and ended with the attempt to capture Charleston, repulsed at the Battle of Sullivan's Island in June of 1776. The leader of the expedition, Clinton, learned from the experiences and they somewhat colored his second attempt to putting down the rebellion in the Carolinas. After the successes of Campbell and Prevost in capturing Savannah and Augusta in 1778, the time was ripe for another incursion into South Carolina.

Campbell's and Prevost's operations on the South Carolina -- Georgia border augured well for the Southern Campaign, for although Campbell abandoned Augusta for lack of men, the Americans under Ashe were defeated at Brier's Creek, and Prevost invaded South Carolina in 1779.<sup>1</sup> Prevost marched toward Charleston, drawing Lincoln's army away from Augusta and Savannah, approaching close enough to rattle Rutledge. He

lost momentum due to a desire among his troops for plunder, distracted by the possibilities of the rich plantations on the road.<sup>2</sup> British celebration of the occupation of Georgia was marred, however, by the fate of a group of loyalists marching to join the British in Augusta. The gathered loyalists once again met an untimely end, as Pickens's militia cut off them off at Kettle Creek on the border. Pickens' troops made the price of assistance to the British clear, as almost half of the one hundred and fifty prisoners were tried for treason, and five hung on the spot. The remaining sixty-five were paroled.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell's administration of Georgia assured the colony remained on the periphery for the remainder of the war. On the coast and in the central areas, Campbell made progress toward returning normalcy. He chose to treat the Georgians fairly, refused to punish men strictly for their beliefs, and enforced the law under the assumption that they were all Englishmen.<sup>4</sup> The exception was Augusta, left in command of loyalist Thomas Brown, a poor choice. The same Brown who had been tarred and feathered in 1775 and had been pillaging the frontier since 1776 now governed the neighbors who had abused him. Brown's treatment of the residents of Augusta and surrounding communities kept the Georgia backcountry at war with itself, as he was known for hanging patriot prisoners or surrendering them to the Indians for torture.<sup>5</sup> Upon his surrender in 1781, Brown's captors placed him under armed guard for his own protection.

The small-scale example of Georgia demonstrates the impact of leadership in a theater of operations. Campbell recognized the need to earn the cooperation of the population in order to maintain order by ensuring safety from internal as well as external enemies. Campbell's premise for pacifying his area of operations was sound, compared with the upheaval inland under Brown. After repulsing the siege of Savannah, the areas

under his control remained quiet throughout the turmoil of the campaign in South and North Carolina.

Former South Carolina royal Attorney General James Simpson accompanied the British forces to Georgia in 1779, with the mission of establishing the status of the rebellion in the backcountries. Simpson encouraged Clinton in his campaign plans, reporting that the long persecuted loyalists felt that after the province was conquered, there would be sufficient numbers to protect themselves when brought to parity with arms and ammunition.<sup>6</sup> Simpson's estimate proved to be a fallacy, but in 1779 Clinton believed that subduing the rebellion in Carolinas would lead to the fall of the Chesapeake Bay areas, separating the South from the Northern states.<sup>7</sup>

Threatened by the loss of Savannah and Augusta to the British, South Carolina's governor decided that the militia had to do more than simply block movement of loyalists. South Carolina Governor Rutledge ordered Williamson, commander of the militia at Ninety-Six, to embody a force and conduct operations into Georgia. Specifically, Williamson was to "destroy all cattle, horses, provisions, and carriages," and prevent anyone from joining the British. The order did not specify the property of anyone in particular, but rather implied the destruction of anything the British may make use of between Ninety-Six and Augusta, without regard for civilians.<sup>8</sup> Upon seeing the order, Moultrie protested the order to Rutledge, arguing the lack of explicit direction indicated the intent to bring the war to women, children, and the elderly.<sup>9</sup> Moultrie expressed concerns about sanctioning a war against the people and the impact of the loss of units in the overall strategy for the defense of the colony, as much of the militia Rutledge planned to use was serving with General Lincoln in Savannah. The primary requirement, Moultrie



argued was preventing an invasion by the British troops in Georgia, not penalizing civilians.

The arrival of Clinton and his army off the Carolina coast brought the militia and Lincoln's army back to the defense of Charleston. As Clinton methodically encircled the city, Lincoln came under pressure by the South Carolina legislature to resisting the siege instead of saving his army to fight on in the countryside. The Continentals repeatedly failed to keep escape routes open, and the governor barely escaped before the last route was cut in a series of skirmishes between Tarleton's British Legion and Pulaski and Washington's cavalries. Lincoln invited Christopher Gadsden, the radical Lieutenant Governor to his council of war, where Lincoln's senior military leaders recommended abandonment of Charleston in order to save the army. Gadsden brought with him his Governor's Council, demanding the army defend the city to the last and threatening that contemplation of a withdrawal would cause the citizens to open the gates to the British and burn boats to prevent the Continental army's escape.<sup>10</sup> Two weeks later they requested Lincoln surrender, after the British commenced bombardment of the city.

Lincoln surrendered the largest number of Continental troops to be taken prisoner in the revolution. Between Rutledge's attempt to draw off combat power in pursuit of his schemes in Georgia and Gadsden's holding the army hostage to Charleston, the government of South Carolina seemed unable to recognize that as leaders they needed to have looked at strategy to maintain control of as much of the colony as possible, instead of investing everything in defending a city. With no army left in South Carolina, many of the militia leaders came in and accepted parole, decimating the colony's military organizations.

The opportunity to keep an army in the field had been lost, and the tattered remnants fled for the sanctuary of North Carolina. Many of the prisoners were paroled and permitted to return to their homes, farms and plantations, under the agreement that they would remain unmolested in exchange for not raising arms against the British occupation. To solidify the hold, forces were dispatched to catch escaping Continentals under Colonel Abraham Buford, to secure the fortress at Ninety-Six, and recapture Augusta. The first of these tasks led to the action that would echo on the fields of Kings Mountain and the Cowpens, and the first example of the impact of the behavior of a tactical leader on a strategy.

The leader of the loyalist British Legion at twenty-seven, Banastre Tarleton earned a reputation for ruthless pursuit and destruction of his enemies. He successfully defeated Continental cavalry units protecting escape routes from Charleston, aiding in the complete encirclement of the city. In June of 1780, he led a combination of troops from his Legion and British regulars in pursuit of Buford's forces. The accomplishment of his forced march after an enemy with a ten-day lead, covering a distance of 105 miles in fifty-four hours is lost in his subsequent actions. After his scouts located the fleeing Continentals, Tarleton sent a messenger to Buford, requesting his surrender, receiving the reply that "I shall defend myself to the last extremity."<sup>11</sup> Buford's poorly organized and led defense failed catastrophically, and in the chaos after the British Legion shattered Buford's line, "a report that they had lost their commanding officer...stimulated the soldiers to a vindictive asperity not easily restrained."<sup>12</sup> The British, by the accounts of Dr. Robert Brownfield, refused calls for quarter and killed the wounded. Other accounts have the wounded being paroled and left in the care of the residents of the Waxhaws.<sup>13</sup>

Tarleton's numbers provided to Cornwallis reported of the Americans, 113 killed and 151 left wounded on the field and paroled.<sup>14</sup> The word of what became known as "Buford's massacre" spread and the phrase "Tarleton's Quarter" entered the lexicon of the Southern Campaign. The actions of the British Legion at the Waxhaws would be used to justify other instances of no quarter given, regardless of the circumstance.

Tarleton, in his memoirs, brushes aside the massacre charge, for he believed that the best means of conducting a war was to kill the enemy. Despite the ferocious reputation of his troops, when not lead by Tarleton himself, their record is poor. Tarleton led the British Legion at Camden, Fishing Creek, Monck's Corner, and Lenud's Ferry. Two of the attacks on British Legion detachments, Williamson's and Wahab's plantations, were successful due to lack of proper sentries and the Legion fleeing in disorder. Under another subordinate at Charlotte, Cornwallis himself had to exhort the British Legion to rejoin the fight.<sup>15</sup> The fighting spirit of the Legion rested with the presence of Tarleton himself, and their conduct toward granting quarter and treating civilians poorly can also be assumed to reflect his example.

The British did not recognize the impact of the British Legion at the Waxhaws. Apparent refusal to accept quarter demonstrated the perceived British intent toward patriot forces that eventually led the partisan war back down the path of uncompromising behavior toward adversaries. Tragically, Clinton never intended to thoroughly antagonize the South. His strategy was stabilize the colony, and return it to loyal colonists, able to administer and defend the colonies.<sup>16</sup> Turning the command of the south over to Cornwallis in order to return to New York, Clinton left a parting gift to the citizens of South Carolina. In his mind, he had written articles of capitulation designed to convince

“those misguided people” that his interest lay in reconciliation, vice retribution.<sup>17</sup> By allowing the militia to return to their homes on parole, he originally did. But Clinton’s proclamation of June 3, 1780 rekindled the resistance. Clinton released the Carolinians from their paroles, “obliging every man to declare and evince his principles,” in order to separate aid the loyalists in rooting out the troublesome elements.<sup>18</sup> He managed instead to outrage the loyalists, who had not suffered to see their tormenters given equal rights and protections.<sup>19</sup>

The proclamation outraged both the neutrals and the paroled patriots. Moultrie, a prisoner as he served in the Continental Army at the time of the surrender, thought it “very fortunate for us...they [loyalists] soon determined on which side to fight and joined their countrymen.”<sup>20</sup> The arrogance of the British officers when dealing with the parole issue exacerbated the rapidly deteriorating situation, as in the case of Captain John James of Williamsburg, sent as a representative from his community to inquire about whether the new rules would require they take up arms against America, to which the Royal Navy captain assigned to accept the oaths responded that the Americans were subject unconditional submission and would therefore be required to fight. James, his brother and nearly the entire local militia promptly joined Marion.<sup>21</sup>

Revoking the paroles followed up by expeditions to convince patriot leaders to declare themselves subject to the Crown backfired, as British and loyalist troops destroyed the homes of both Pickens and Sumter. Sumter, whose military ambitions had been frustrated earlier in the war, needed little encouragement. Pickens, on the other hand, had convinced his militia to accept the parole terms in May, and therefore notified the British authorities that he considered himself released from parole as they had

violated the conditions in burning his home. A month after Charleston fell, patriot forces rebuilt themselves. Regardless of the initial belief that South Carolina had been pacified, the defeat of yet another loyalist militia by Rutherford's North Carolina militia at Ramsour's Mills in June of 1780 served as a reminder that forces could still check movement.

Cornwallis found himself in a campaign against an army in North Carolina, a campaign against partisans disrupting his lines of communication, and a battle for the loyalty of the population. Cornwallis made a fatal error of handing the delicate pacification task of an increasingly perturbed population over to several men whose first course of action would be oppression. He also did not take into consideration that the loyalists now felt safe to even the score with their former tormentors. In his history of the Revolution, Fortescue describes Cornwallis's problem as having a population that had used intimidation of the "most violent and barbarous kind," leading to a strife that would plague both American and British generals, and lays the responsibility in the hands of the revolutionaries whose excesses started the civil war in the Carolinas.<sup>22</sup>

Cornwallis seemed to have failed to appreciate the attitudes and preferences of subordinates in executing his orders. In spite of instructions to treat the population well unless known to be a patriot, his usually very young officers resorted to tactics that forced loyalists and neutrals alike to reevaluate their position. Cornwallis was certainly in an awkward position, trying to ascertain who was a loyalist and who was not, much less coping with a militia that could take refuge with family or flee to the swamps, woods, or mountains when threatened. The patriots even used his correspondence, altered slightly,

against him to “spread false reports throughout the whole province to encourage the disaffected and intimidate the others” as he reported to Clinton.<sup>23</sup>

The British regulars assumed the provincials were inferior, and treated them as such.<sup>24</sup> Loyalists that enlisted under the British found themselves used as orderlies and menial laborers, in spite of the fact most had been fighting for several years in the civil war. Lord Rawdon’s comments on a unit of Harrison’s rangers acting as guides for him typified the attitude -- he publicly praised them but privately commented on their lack of discipline and apparent primary motivation of plunder.<sup>25</sup> As for the general population, they were looked upon as inferior from the start. The British conviction of moral and cultural superiority stemmed from the pre-American colonial experience of Scotland and Ireland in earlier centuries, as the inhabitants were perceived as mentally and culturally inferior.<sup>26</sup> Clinton described the emotional state of South Carolina in 1780 as “[T]heir hearts, poor fellows, are British, though their language is not the most correct.”<sup>27</sup> During Cornwallis’s race with Greene, loyalist troops were used in place of horses and abused by the British, fleeing in the night to join the patriot forces.<sup>28</sup> British disdain for the colonists manifested itself in the behavior of the British and loyalist forces toward any suspected or confirmed patriots.

As leaders of troops in areas only superficially pacified, the British and loyalist partisan leaders behavior was similar to that of the partisan acting outside military organizations. The tenor for how the British felt the war would be fought was set early by the actions of Tarleton’s subordinate, whose career in South Carolina was both brief and bloody. Captain Christian Huck, a loyalist from Philadelphia, set out in July 1780 under orders to destroy Hill’s Iron Works, owned by a patriot colonel. En route, he

reportedly killed a Quaker child walking down the road carrying a bible, and in a stroke of luck captured Bratton and McClure of Sumter's partisans visiting their families. Huck supposedly then struck one of the men's mother with his sword when she protested his intent to hang her son.<sup>29</sup>

Huck proceeded to march toward the New Acquisition to recruit militia, however at his next stop, the Bratton's family home, events got out of hand again. John Bratton, a child at the time, recalled years later that Huck had bounced him on his knee while trying to convince his mother to reveal where her husband to persuade him to change sides. Upon her refusal, young John was thrown to the floor and his mother threatened with a reaping hook by a trooper.<sup>30</sup> She was saved by a loyalist from neighboring Camden, Captain Charles Adamson and would return the favor the following day. Huck quartered his troops for the night at a nearby plantation and members of both the Bratton and McClure families rode to the partisan and militia camps. Combined but not coordinated, the forces attacked the plantation and killed Huck and many of his men, wounding more. Adamson was wounded, and being a loyalist from South Carolina threatened with execution, until saved by Mrs. Bratton due to his actions at her home.<sup>31</sup>

Accounts abound of similar behavior by men under the British and their officers. The British officers did not overly trust any loyalist troops unless they were directly attached to them, due to questionable loyalties when away from British supervision. The British thought little of the patriots, between those believing them merely misguided and swayed by a few and those believing them rabble to be put down and beaten into submission to their old allegiances.<sup>32</sup> And beating they tried, between Wemyss' burning rampages and the general destruction that followed Tarleton.

Wemyss was known to steal loyalist's livestock, vice using the credit system Cornwallis was trying to use in order to placate the civilian population.<sup>33</sup> In areas under his control, Wemyss allowed the killing of livestock for food and left remainder to rot. Both he and Tarleton gave loyalist detachments free range to plunder, while they rounded up men suspected of being patriot sympathizers or breaking parole. Under Cornwallis's order they were tried by their captors and most were hanged after "courts martial" in the Williamsburg district. When a local doctor interceded on behalf of a man about to be hanged as a parole violator, his home was promptly torched.<sup>34</sup>

In a letter dated 20 September 1780, Wemyss reported to Cornwallis that he had burned over fifty homes and plantations, hanged many men, and slaughtered most of the sheep and cattle. He went on to say the area was subdued but he had not won the favor of the populace.<sup>35</sup> He was certainly correct in the latter, but terribly wrong in the former, as the plantations burned and livestock slaughtered in many cases belonged to men with either Sumter or Marion.

Lieutenant Anthony Allaire, one of Ferguson's American Volunteers, wrote about foraging, burning and the destruction of property thought to be patriot; he talks of collecting livestock and slaves to drive them, and breaking furniture and windows as they passed.<sup>36</sup> Not surprisingly, he later notes after passing through a settlement in the backcountry that they it was "composed of the most violent rebel I ever saw, particularly the ladies."<sup>37</sup> Cornwallis' subordinates lacked the fundamental understanding of the consequences of conducting war on the civilian population, encouraged defection to the side of the patriots. If the British, ostensibly there to protect the citizens were unable and unwilling to do so and could not protect the people from their own troops, much less



partisans, the campaign was doomed to failure. In a highly structured organization such as the eighteenth century British Army, neither acknowledging and nor punishing the excesses of their subordinates in fighting the partisans gave de facto approval of the tactics.

The patriots, forming partisan groups based upon the militia units, quickly announced their presence and ideas on the proper conduct of a war at the British outposts of Hanging Rock and Rocky Mount. The Hanging Rock attack led by Davie, was a diversion for the Rocky Mount operation, but demonstrated how the British could expect the militia to fight. Upon his arrival at Hanging Rock, Davie discovered newly arrived North Carolina loyalist militia outside the fortifications and pounced. Davie took advantage of the similar dress and infiltrated the camp with half his men, who opened fire. This brought the other half of his men into battle from the rear and they made quick work of the loyalist militia, under the shocked eyes of the British garrison. No prisoners were taken, as Davie explained that it would be imprudent due to the proximity of the British.<sup>38</sup> The explanation falls apart when compared to his conduct at Wahab's plantation, where he ambushed part of the British Legion and the British 71st Regiment -- the British left their dead and wounded when they fled in a panic, but Davie ordered no prisoners would be taken.<sup>39</sup>

Sumter, meanwhile, made his unsuccessful attack on the British camp. Reinforced by Davie after Hanging Rock he again engaged the British camp at Rocky Mount, and almost succeeded in driving them out, but for the courage of a loyalist captain trying to maintain order in the chaos, and Sumter's men discovering the British stores. In short, the attack ultimately failed as his men were almost completely distracted by the plunder

nearby.<sup>40</sup> Sumter hung two captured loyalists who had recently defected from his forces, but the lack of discipline on the part of Sumter's men cost them the outpost

These, as well as Huck's defeat at Williamson's plantation, are among the first attacks against organized British units. The partisan war is more known for the ambushes and surprise attacks that bedeviled the movement of the British, but they illustrate some of the dynamics between the two forces. First, the militia proved highly mobile, attacking Huck in the early morning after receiving information the preceding evening. Davies's attitude toward the defeated militia at Hanging Rock demonstrated what loyalists could expect if engaged and wounded, although circumstances such as Adamson's occurred. The loyalist's probability of survival became highly dependent of who engaged him, as Davie was one of several who repeatedly found reasons to allow no prisoners. Those taken prisoner faced a high probability of being tried and hanged for treason, even under the most respected leaders, such as Pickens at Kettle Creek, if only due to the a desire among the troops for vengeance and punishment. The British and loyalists were equally willing to do the same to any captured patriot forces, as in the case of Gabriel Marion, Francis Marion's nephew, killed by the men under Capt. Jesse Barfield upon his capture.<sup>41</sup>

The conduct of the partisans varied by leadership and organization. The flamboyant Sumter was aggressive and tenacious, however his reckless disregard for common sense on occasion made several militia leaders wary of working with him. He offered the services of his militia to Gates, with whom worked well. Pancake suggests the spirit of cooperation with Gates was a result of them having similarly over inflated opinions of themselves. Gates may have understood how to motivate Sumter, granting his

request to capture Cornwallis' supply train. Sumter's first encounter with Tarleton came as a result, for the British Legion surprised him at Fishing Creek seeking to recapture the lost supplies. As a partisan, Sumter was a large thorn in Tarleton's side, who spent more time chasing Sumter than Marion, in spite of having provided Marion with his nickname of the Swamp Fox.<sup>42</sup> Sumter impressed Rutledge, however, who appointed him the commander of the South Carolina militia. Sumter's judgment in the confiscation of property during his operations was questioned after the Revolutionary War, when victims accused him of acting out of avarice.

Military record aside, Greene found Sumter problematic, for while Sumter commanded the South Carolina militia, he tended toward what Greene called "rambling predatory excursions unconnected with the operations."<sup>43</sup> Sumter chose not to respond to Greene's orders to join Morgan, and refused to assist in supplying his men. Morgan's presence in the Catawba area irritated Sumter, almost as if Morgan was poaching in his private reserve.<sup>44</sup> Sumter missed the battle at the Cowpens, as his authority as the commander of the militia appeared more important than the larger goal of defeating the British.<sup>45</sup>

If troops reflect upon their leadership, the record of Sumter's is questionable. Besides the looting debacle at Rocky Mount, Sumter's reputation was that of a plunderer, to the extent of his receiving permission to raise troops under a plan to pay the new troops by actively plundering all the loyalist assets, offering slaves as pay. Marion refused orders to raise troops under the plan, considering it unethical. Discipline appears to have been poor, for Tarleton due repeatedly surprised Sumter to lack of proper security, as at Fishing Creek.<sup>46</sup> Lee called him a "not overly scrupulous as a soldier in his

use of means,” continuing that his interest in victory over all else led to a willingness to risk lives without hesitation and thought for the consequence.<sup>47</sup>

Lee, however, as a participant in the Southern Campaign, has occasion to be a “not overly scrupulous soldier” himself. By his actions at Pyle’s massacre, Lee made his arguments on the brutality of Tarleton rather hypocritical, as his men attacked and killed the loyalists who still had their guns over their shoulders when his men charged.<sup>48</sup> On operations in support of Marion, the men under his leadership had to be stopped from hanging captured loyalists on Lee’s orders.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast, Greene used Pickens and Marion as part of his campaign. Pickens earned his reputation by maintaining an organization that, while composed of militia, operated well attached to Continental troops. While conducting raids on the British outposts from Ninety-Six to Charleston, he cooperated with both Morgan and Greene, recognizing the importance of the cause as a whole, vice over inflating his own role. Although he condoned the hanging of prisoners after Kettle Creek, his men were better disciplined, and treated prisoners fairly under his direction. Loyalist militia leader Dunlop, known for his ravages in the backcountry, was killed while his prisoner, Pickens offered a reward for the identification of the murderer for prosecution.<sup>50</sup> The guilty man was never identified, however the incident demonstrated the character of Pickens. Pickens would be elected to lead the militia of North Carolina after Davidson’s death, a measure of the respect with which he was regarded.

Marion as a partisan leader performed similarly. Having escaped from Charleston before it fell, he fled to join the Continentals in North Carolina, only for a puzzled Gates to send him back with the mission of raising militia forces and disrupting the movement

of the British. Marion ambushed British patrols and supply lines, skirmished against loyalist militia, and was accused by Tarleton of predatory behavior against the loyalist population.<sup>51</sup> Marion took offense at any accusation of being motivated by plunder; although he and Pickens both foraged for supplies, they tended to take only what was needed for survival.<sup>52</sup> Marion expelled from his militia anyone unwilling to submit to his injunction against reprisals and plunder, and disliked practitioners of war against women and children.<sup>53</sup> While frustrated by the constant coming and going of his men, he understood the need for them to tend to their families and crops, releasing many to check on their families in the wake of Wemyss' burnings. The impact of his leadership in the field can be seen in comparing the behavior of his men when not under his control, when they were known to have vented their anger on loyalists.<sup>54</sup> When Greene assumed command, Marion willingly cooperated with him, as well as with Lee's Legion.

Sumter and Marion as delegates to the South Carolina General Assembly in the closing days of the Revolution highlight the philosophical differences in the two leaders. Having negotiated informal truces with some of the loyalist militia leaders,<sup>55</sup> Marion sought to protect the lives and property of the entire population as a first step in rebuilding the war torn colony. Sumter, conversely, introduced legislation to protect the partisans from suit over involuntary requisitions.

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<sup>1</sup>Sir John Fortescue, *The War of Independence* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1911; reprint London: Greenhill Books, 2001), 132-133 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>2</sup>George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats: The American Revolution Through the Eyes of Those who Fought and Lived It* (Cleveland: World Publishing, Inc., 1957; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 393 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>3</sup>Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 102-103.

<sup>4</sup>Weller, 132.

<sup>5</sup>Buchanan, 192.

<sup>6</sup>Alan S. Brown, "James Simpson's Report on the Carolina Loyalist, 1779-1780," *Journal of Southern History* 21, no. 4 (1955): 517.

<sup>7</sup>Sir Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 151.

<sup>8</sup>William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (New York: David Longworth, 1802; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968), vol. 1, 371-2 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:386-9

<sup>10</sup>Buchanan, 66.

<sup>11</sup>Tarleton, 79.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>13</sup>Dr. Robert Brownfield to William D. James, in Commanger, 1111-1113.

<sup>14</sup>Tarleton, 84.

<sup>15</sup>Buchanan, 189.

<sup>16</sup>John Shy, "British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781," in *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*, ed. Jeffery J. Crow and Larry E. Tise (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 160.

<sup>17</sup>Clinton, 171.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>19</sup>Stedman, 199.

<sup>20</sup>Moultrie, 2: 276..

<sup>21</sup>Bass, 33-34.

<sup>22</sup>Fortescue, 130-131.

<sup>23</sup>Franklin Wickwire and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company: 1970), 147.

<sup>24</sup>Smith, 34.

<sup>25</sup>Bass, 85.

<sup>26</sup>Jane Ohlenmeyer, "Seventeenth-Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories," *American Historical Review* 104, vol. 2 Apr (1999): 459-60.

<sup>27</sup>Clinton 171-175

<sup>28</sup>Stedman, 225.

<sup>29</sup>Buchanan, 12-113.

<sup>30</sup>Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston: Walker and James, 1851) text-fiche, 336-338.

<sup>31</sup>Buchanan, 115.

<sup>32</sup>Morrill, 77.

<sup>33</sup>Bowers, 67.

<sup>34</sup>Hugh F. Rankin, *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), 76-77.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>36</sup>Anthony Allaire, *Diary of Lieutenant Anthony Allaire*, *Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution* (Reprinted from Lyman Copeland Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*; New York: Arno Press, 1968), 9.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>38</sup>Buchanan, 133.

<sup>39</sup>Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 16.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>41</sup>Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1864), 209.

<sup>42</sup>Russell F. Weigley, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 23.

<sup>43</sup>Morrill, 160.

<sup>44</sup>Treacy, 77.

<sup>45</sup>Morrill, 127.

<sup>46</sup>Buchanan 174-5.

<sup>47</sup>Treacy, 20-21.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>49</sup>Buchanan , 396.

<sup>50</sup>Morrill, 200.

<sup>51</sup>Bass, 84.

<sup>52</sup>Buchanan 396.

<sup>53</sup>Moultrie, 236.

<sup>54</sup>Rankin, 127.

<sup>55</sup>Moultrie, 340.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

When Charleston fell in May of 1780, the promise of a successful campaign lay before the British troops. The speed with which Georgia had been subdued, combined with the number of prisoners from the Continental Army and the seeming collapse of the patriot militia's will to fight, led Clinton and Cornwallis both to believe the prospects for the successful pacification of both South and North Carolina were foregone conclusions. Immediate missteps by the British, combined with the ravages of a civil war shaped the conditions for an almost immediate loss of control of the countryside, which hampered efforts to defeat the remainder of the Continental Army and drained resources needed elsewhere.

The chilling behavior of the combatants in the south concerned the both leaders on the British and American side, for whoever held the terrain was left with a society in which reconciliation was unlikely, if not impossible.

The colonist in 1775 found himself faced with an unwelcome choice, that of supporting either the provincial government, established as a means of circumventing the Royal government, or supporting the Crown and facing the increasing power of the Committees of Safety acting for the Continental Congress. The decision came from any combination of personal beliefs, community norms, frustrated ambition, and pragmatism. Some elements of rebellion against parental authority were present, such as the case of the Laceys, the father denouncing his son for joining the patriot cause, and son John going so far as to tie his father to the bed to prevent passing intelligence on an ambush about to happen.<sup>1</sup>

The perceptions of the residents of the backcountry certainly influenced the means of applying pressure on them to conform to the requirements of the Continental Association. On his mission for the Council of Safety, Drayton attempted convince the residents to join the Association, however his words and actions confirmed the low opinion in which he held them. In his correspondence he described haranguing the crowd, and despite cautions, called up the militia to strong arm some communities, the first steps toward armed confrontation with the strongly loyalist militia. His object in forcing the loyalists to show their hand was met, but at a heavy cost, for the skirmishes became the opening acts of the backcountry civil war.

On the heels of the Regulator movement and the Cherokee Wars, the fight for the backcountry assumed the form of the Indian Wars with ruthlessness toward neighbors similar to that of the various Indian wars throughout the colonial history. Having learned to fight in these conflicts, bringing the same tactics of the destruction of any means of support was the logical conclusion.

Having already painted the loyalist as a second-class citizen by stripping him of rights but offering little protection, the predominantly planter class provincial government allowed vigilantism to rise. Having traditionally chosen to distance itself from maintaining order on the frontiers, the provincial government took little action to ameliorate the situation, acting only upon the threat of the Cherokee entering the Revolutionary War. By acknowledging the excesses only when committed upon patriot supporters, the civil government lent quasi-official approval to the behavior. The provincial government's apparent indifference was consistent with its previous attitude

toward the backcountry, one of ignoring the problems in the backcountry until the colony required assistance.

The occupation of the British changed the dynamic somewhat, for as the patriots, the loyalists and the British all lamented the devastation of the fighting, it fell to the individual leader to determine the behavior he was willing either advocate or tolerate. The level of violence revolved around the leader's expectations of his men and their relationship and loyalty to the leader at the tactical level. The long-term relationships, built from pre-war militia experience, social ties, war service and vision, further impacted the conduct of the troops. The troops under more organizationally oriented leaders, such as Pickens, tended to be better disciplined and able to cooperate with other units as well as limit impact on civilians in their operations.

Likewise, the conduct of the troops directly influenced the relative success or failure of the Southern campaign. Cornwallis and Greene both understood this, however Greene made better use of his limited assets to thwart Cornwallis. Greene's use of the militia leaders to keep partisans in the field offered him several important advantages over Cornwallis. First, while Cornwallis fixated on the existing Continental army in North Carolina, the constant disruption of his lines of communication by the partisans sapped his resources and threatened distraction. Additionally, the officers available to search for and destroy the partisans were not equal to the task, for it required a level of maturity and tact beyond the experience of the junior leaders. As a professional European army, the British had neither the training nor the experience to fight a partisan war.

Greene's second advantage lay in the tactics used by Cornwallis' juniors to prosecute the task of rooting out the patriots. While Greene did not advocate provoking

harsh responses against civilians by the British, the brutality with which the British retaliated for attacks added to the support for the patriot cause. Even in the use of rhetoric the British undermined themselves, such as Ferguson's challenge to the Overhill communities. His threat to lay waste to their homes and harm their families contributed to his demise at King's Mountain, with a second order effect of further convincing loyalists to refuse to answer repeated British calls to take up arms, and as the British proved unable to protect them, change sides.<sup>2</sup>

By leading Cornwallis all over North Carolina with little support from the people and no logistics support, Greene drew him out of South Carolina and continually whittled away his forces. Although in most of the battles fought in North Carolina Cornwallis held the ground at the day's end, the attrition of irreplaceable men ultimately made such victory hollow. South Carolina had been left in capable hands under Rawdon, but without support, he could only slow the drive of the multiple partisan forces attacking the outposts and moving toward Ninety-Six, the only garrison to withstand a siege by Greene.

Greene grasped the need to quickly place the state under civil control, but with the ravages of the civil war in mind, pushed for protective measures for civilians. He warned that Sumter's plan for paying recruits by seizing loyalist property would be counterproductive to the goal of establishing a stable government. Recognizing the collapse of most civil authority throughout much of South Carolina and Georgia, Greene became as closely involved in the reestablishment of a system of government as he could within his understanding of the civil-military power structure. Greene's understanding of the deep seated problems now facing the loyalists, who had also been fighting for their

homes, led him to encourage Rutledge and the rest of the state government to seek reconciliation with the loyalists.<sup>3</sup> The laws enacted imposed penalties on those who chose to stay, and while restitution would be required under the Treaty of Paris, the loyalists were not welcomed in many cases.

The fate of most of the loyalists was expulsion, a few to communities in the West Indies, many to England, and many more to Canada. The fighting and the bloodshed over the eight years of active civil war prevented the assimilation, or desire to, of many of the loyalists. Having suffered from harassment, economic ruin, and outright physical abuse, to simply embrace the new order and the neighbors who had mistreated them was not possible. Nor were many communities willing to accept the loyalists remaining.

The human cost of the American Revolution in the south came from both civil and military errors. The provincial government allowed persecution of the loyalists to both convince them of their error and to neutralize them as a threat to its authority. While imprisonment, sanctions and some physical abuse were tolerated; the government either was unaware of or willing to accept the upward spiral in the physical abuse of dissenters. The goal of gaining and maintaining control of the state and its organization led to actions that triggered a civil war in the back country and effectively guaranteed the loyalists no place in the post war society. Following the example of the Regulators and experiences in the various Indian Wars contributed to the scope of violence in the civil war, increasing divisions in the fractured society. The use of the militia as an arm of the political organization served to intimidate opponents and leave them without any sense of security, and open to those who would take advantage of the situation. The basic militia organization would, however, become the nucleus of resistance to the British occupation.

The partisan war against the British would have probably arisen regardless, but British missteps after the fall of Charleston almost guaranteed it. Of the leaders associated with the partisans, until paroles were cancelled and loyalty demanded, only Marion remained in the field a week after Lincoln's surrender. Cornwallis conceptually understood the war he had to fight was equally to persuade the people that it was to their benefit to rejoin the British as to militarily defeat the Continental Army hovering to the north. Like most of the leaders in the campaign, it was not a war he had any preparation for and could neither fight nor win. Even Greene, although a military success could not repair the damage done by the civil war, partly fought under his aegis.

The actions of Cornwallis' subordinates bedeviled his attempts at calming the situation--Ferguson's taunt brought a segment of the population indifferent to either cause into the field.<sup>4</sup> While the partisan groups operating under several patriot leaders antagonized the few active loyalists, the nearly total inability to defeat the patriots in high visibility actions discouraged active participation on the part of those just trying to retain their homes and lives.

In planning operations, the challenges faced in 1775 by the colonial civil and military authorities are worth revisiting. The means of fighting and the aftermath of battles had unimaginable ramifications, from the Waxhaws forward. "Tarleton's quarter" was given at Kings Mountain and Pyle's massacre; the constant trial and hanging of prisoners in both camps simply encouraged the practice to continue at greater levels. The secondary effects of the policies enacted created an environment that led to a traumatic civil war, concurrent with an equally brutal partisan war against occupying forces. Efforts to exert control seemed doomed to fail as the animosity had fed upon itself for an

extended period. In the end, parts of the population had to relocate, as the colonial society was unable to mend itself.

Military planners must understand the underlying causes of the conflict and the social and cultural structure of a nation before engaging in any dispute. Civil affairs are central to creating a plan that will mitigate the often negative effects of American military intervention. Civil affairs organizations outside the military are vital as part of the process, for failure to synchronize the plans and objectives will weaken efforts and may cause both to fail. An assumption that should be challenged every time it arises is the ability for the victors to accept the defeated as members of the society and government as well as the willingness of the defeated to accept their loss and become participants in the rebuilding. A frank assessment of the desired end state must pass the test of acceptability to a reasonable man, however with the caveat that the “reasonable man” should have the cultural and political biases of the target population(s).

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<sup>1</sup>Buchanan, 114.

<sup>2</sup>Moultrie, 2: 252.

<sup>3</sup>Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 375.

<sup>4</sup>Morrill, 102-103.

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